Good afternoon distinguished guests, leaders of the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

Families, friends, and graduates of the Warrior Leaders Course Class

04-11.

Class 04-11 started out with 55 students, today only 47 remain. Over the past few weeks Class 04-11 has grown into a cohesive team with one wish

To hear a short speech on graduation day.

Almost 19 years ago I was sitting in a theater similar to this one in Grafenwoher Germany about to graduate from the 7TH Army Noncommissioned Officer Academy – known as the Primary Leadership Development Course in those days.

Thinking back on that day I asked myself what would I have wished I knew then that was somehow omitted in my guest speakers talk…..

So I decided this afternoon not to lecture you on the fundamentals of leadership or revisit the various topics you have already been exposed to during the last few weeks - - - -

Instead I will share a few observations and maybe a lesson or two I have learned a long the way

You've all heard of the four C's –

Courage – Candor – Competence – Commitment – (WLC Crest)

There should be a fifth – *Compassion*; all leaders at some point in their career must understand its place in their leadership style and decision making process –

Values – They must be at the foundation of everything we do! Just so I'm clear – I am talking about the Army Values.

They are all interdependent , however LOYALTY is the one that I have come to embrace the most. An individual that lives by the Army value – LOYALTY - is more likely to adhere to the other six.

Unfortunately, not everyone wearing this uniform possess nor lives the Army values – It's not due to a lack of education or awareness either - the Soldiers Creed and the Warrior Ethos clearly articulate what is expected of us as Soldiers. Yet sexual assault, as an example, continues to be a problem within our ranks…..

As a junior enlisted Soldier or new NCO you need to identify those that do not share in those beliefs and decide a course of action - You know who they are – someday soon this will

Leadership – Always give orders and information in your own name, and insist your subordinates do the same. Never say, "Because the Commander / 1SG said". Voice any concerns up the chain of command but support all command decisions as if they were your own regardless whether you agree or disagree. (illegal / unethical / immoral?)

As GEN Colin Powell said, "...being responsible sometimes means pissing people off". Leadership is not about winning a popularity contest. It is about operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization. You do not have to be a senior NCO to improve the unit. A good idea is a good idea regardless of where it comes from. Do not stifle ingenuity.

Leadership demands ACTION – follow through at the first line supervisor level. Too many "leaders" point a Soldier and their issue to an agency and then act as if the task is completed –

Counseling: Every Soldier deserves to be counseled and professionally developed by their first line supervisor.

Supervisors must ensure that the counseling is performance oriented and specifically addresses strengths and weaknesses, provides a plan for improvement, and includes recommendations for career development.

Supervisors must avoid the use of pre-printed fill-in-the-blanks counseling statements. They do not develop Soldiers. (FM 6-22 App B)

Correspondence Course's -

Discipline - This is always a hot topic - definitions vary on what is or is not a sign of a disciplined unit or Soldier –

I will just share a 2 minute story and let you decide…..

Cell phone story –

UCMJ: As NCOs we do not adjudicate UCMJ violations – however, I feel that a judicial action administered firmly, fairly, promptly, and consistently is a chain of command obligation and your Soldier's right.

Physical fitness – Maybe one of the most important ingredients to sustained success as a professional Soldier!

The Final thought I will leave you with is Mentorship – Find one